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7 August 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Morning Meeting of 7 August 1969

Godfrey called attention to the current Soviet standdown in air activity and commented that there is no apparent explanation.

[redacted] briefed on the substance of the Watch Report pertaining to the likelihood of a Sino/Soviet clash. He called the Director's attention to D/BNE's judgment that the Report was perhaps too positive in some respects. A brief discussion followed.

Carver called attention to press coverage of the VC attack on the Camranh air base and added that it appears that only six sappers were involved.

Maury related that he had spent an hour with Senator Bayh and briefed on Senator Ervin's apparent willingness to now consider some amendments to his bill. Maury added that of particular concern now is the possible deletion of 102(c) pertaining to the Director's authority to dismiss employees.

*Maury noted receipt of a request from Congressmen Clark MacGregor and Byron Rogers for a briefing prior to their projected visit to Prague. The Director concurred.

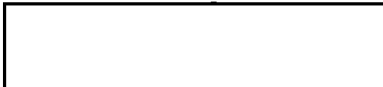
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*Maury expressed a desire to brief Woodruff and Blandford on the appearance of a new SS-9 (see Morning Meeting Minutes of 6 August). The Director concurred.

DDS&T noted that the Land Panel had met yesterday and noted that the NRO Executive Committee Meeting was still scheduled for 15 August.

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The Director noted receipt of a memorandum from Abbot Smith critiquing Senator Dodd's speech of 1 August.



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The Director noted his concern that cable traffic appears to increase at a rate of 1 percent per year, noted the volume of community traffic that could be precipitated by the Geneva disarmament talks, and expressed hope that reasonable efforts would be made by all Departments to reduce this load.

DDI noted receipt of information from John Holdridge on the President's appreciation of the PDB during the course of his recent travels.



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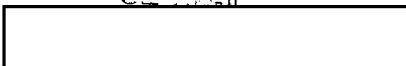
L. K. White

*Extracted and sent to action officer

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Enemy Enters Base, Blasts U.S. Hospital

From News Dispatches

SAIGON, Aug. 7 (Thursday) —Vietcong commandos sneaked into an American convalescent hospital at Camranh

Bay Thursday, blew up more than half of the wards with explosive charges and fired at patients as they tried to take cover.

The commandos pulled out without suffering a casualty after killing two Americans, wounding 99 and destroying 10 wards and damaging three others.

The giant air base and convalescent hospital 195 miles northeast of Saigon had been considered one of the most secure areas in Vietnam. Former President Lyndon B. Johnson visited it in 1966 and 1967.

Ten other Americans were reported missing. The commandos also blew up the hospital's water tower, the staff officers' barracks and a garbage truck.

"As the patients ran out of the wards, other enemy troops on top of a hill overlooking the compound opened fire with AK-47 assault rifles," said Sgt. Michael Lackey of Mount Prospect, Ill., a staff member of the Army's 6th Convalescent Hospital.

Lackey said none of the 732 patients in the 21 wards was hit by the rifle fire. Other U.S. spokesmen said most of the casualties caused by the

explosions in the wards were patients, although some hospital staff members were wounded when the officers' barracks were blown up.

The sapper attack on the hospital coincided with a 15-round rocket barrage aimed at the Camranh air base just south of there.

See VIETNAM, A13, Col. 5

Enemy Infiltrates U.S. Base, Blows Up Hospital Killing 2 and Injuring 99

VIETNAM, From A1

"The ward doors were locked," said Lackey. "They threw satchel charges on the outside. The wards are pretty sturdy. They are one-story and made of heavy timber and metal."

Each ward contained 38 beds. Lackey said the attack lasted about five to 10 minutes.

Military spokesmen theorized the commandos quietly cut the barbed wire around the hospital compound, then seized a 45-foot-high water tower on top of a hill overlooking the hospital complex.

Using the water tower as a command post, some of the Vietcong set up rifle positions

there while others crept toward the wards. When they abandoned the tower, they blew it up, leaving the hospital temporarily without water.

Reuters reported other action:

Elsewhere, the U.S. command announced the loss of another Phantom jet fighter-bomber over South Vietnam and the death of its two crewmen.

A U.S. spokesman said the supersonic aircraft was shot down Monday over a jungle area 16 miles northwest of Quangnai City.

The total of U.S. fixed-wing aircraft shot down by guerrillas over South Vietnam now stands at 377.

A light observation helicopter was shot down Tuesday 40 miles south of Danang. The number of helicopters downed over South Vietnam since 1961, now totals 1251, the spokesman said.

In other action a combined South Vietnamese and American force killed 35 Vietcong in an hour-long battle 32 miles northwest of Saigon Tuesday, a U.S. military spokesman reported Wednesday.

Helicopter gunships and

heavy artillery helped pound the guerrillas for an hour before they withdrew from the area, the spokesman said. One American soldier was killed and south Vietnamese casualties were described as light.

B-52 bombers continued their daily pounding of guerrilla positions Wednesday with dawn strikes in the northern province of Thuathien, about 23 miles southeast of Hue, and Binhduong Province 37 miles northwest of Saigon, the command announced.

The level of fighting remained at a low ebb, however, with just five rocket or mortar attacks reported throughout the country last night.